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ABSTRACT

Described is a multi-faceted money system which utilizes positive and negative reinforcement while at the same time incorporating peer pressure and reinforcement for behavior modification. The system uses such items as money, checks, deposit slips, and bank books. Children have jobs such as pencil sellers, banker, or door monitor, and receive pay checks. The children can spend their money on things such as popcorn, free time, or a bowling trip with the teacher. This system is good for handling behavior problems, teaching economics, and motivating students with low ability. Money is raised to purchase the prizes by a yearly paper drive. (BB)

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TRY P.R.A.I.S.E.

Positive Reinforcement And Individualized Systematic Economics

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A manuscript submitted for publication

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TRY P.R.A.I.S.E.

Positive Reinforcement And Individualized Systematic Economics

Have you tried behavior modification through positive reinforcement? Was it difficult for you to find meaningful rewards for your middle grade children? If you found meaningful rewards did you also find them expensive? Did you discover that a check mark or point system didn't seem to motivate your middle graders? Would you like to establish a system of reinforcement in your classroom that is meaningful, applicable to curriculum and life, motivating and inexpensive? If your answers to any of the above questions is yes, you may be interested in the behavior modification model I have devised and tested with continuing success.

The general consensus of prominent psychologists today concerning behavior modification is that behavior is best changed through a system that positively reinforces appropriate behavior. On the other hand behavioral psychologists agree that all negative behavior can't be changed strictly through positive reinforcement. They also will agree that children between the ages of ten and sixteen, depending upon the individual, are influenced more by peer pressure than they are by teacher approval or disapproval. The dichotomy of these philosophies makes it very difficult to establish a system of reinforcement that will cover all areas of behavior.

In a strictly positive reinforcement system we find many children being positively reinforced by their peers for inappropriate behavior while this same behavior is being ignored by the teacher. In this type of situation discipline often becomes a problem, and the reinforcements do very little in the way of correcting the negative behaviors. At the same time a positive reinforcement system that deals strictly with behavior does little or nothing to motivate students

to learn, especially the low student who is generally a behavior problem because of his or her low ability. The system I have devised attempts to solve some of the problems that exist in other behavior modification systems.

P.R.A.I.S.E. is a multi-faceted money system which utilizes positive and negative reinforcement while at the same time incorporates peer pressure and reinforcement for behavior modification. The system motivates, relates closely to life situations and can be applied to all areas of curriculum. Most of all it works.

The goals of the system are simple. They are to motivate students to learn more, especially the lower ability students, and to provide a variety of learning experiences such as budgeting, making bank deposits and other such everyday situations, which are applicable to social living. The system is also used for behavior modification and has proven to be quite successful along that line.

P.R.A.I.S.E. allows a great deal of flexibility in that it can be used individually as well as with groups. It also incorporates the use of peer pressure in situations which warrant it.

In the five years of implementation of the P.R.A.I.S.E. system I have experienced excellent results. Students who seldom perform in class begin to take an interest in school. Case after case of behavior problem children have been curtailed, (according to previous teachers' and principals' evaluation). Educational growth has been outstanding, although I'm not going to give all the credit to the system. Most of all the system turns the classroom into a more natural type environment that is very motivating to the children.

GETTING STARTED

As is the case with many programs the most difficult aspect of P.R.A.I.S.E. is getting started. The teacher must be prepared for all facets of the basic program before presenting it to the class. Of course, the program can be expanded or reduced to meet each teacher's and classroom's individual needs without affecting the results of the system.

The following is a list of basic items needed to start the program. Each item will be explained in detail following the list.

1. Money
2. Checks
3. Savings books for each child
4. Deposit slips
5. Bank balance sheets
6. Desk check sheets (optional)
7. A job for every child in the room
8. Reinforcers

Money

The backbone of the entire P.R.A.I.S.E. system is money. I know many of the readers are saying already that our society is capitalistic enough without bringing it into the classroom. It may be true that I am bringing a certain amount of capitalism into the classroom, but it is a very positive and learning type of capitalism that every one of them will have to use in later life. A competitive type of capitalism is used minimally in the P.R.A.I.S.E. system.

Although money can be designed many different ways, the way I found to be very successful and which the children seem to enjoy and learn from is the duplication of actual legal tender. This helps the children recognize various denominations of American money, while it encourages actual "money management" skills.

Checks

Monthly, bi-monthly or weekly, if you like, every student receives a paycheck. Before designing your classroom's checks you may want to ask the children

for suggestions as to the name of your room's bank. The checks are designed much the same as a personal check leaving out the account number, for legal reasons, and other unnecessary items.

Savings Books

Each child should have a savings book which will enable him or her to deposit money in the bank. The children may or may not be using all of their money for short range reinforcements and the savings account allows them to put aside money for long range reinforcements.

The savings accounts have many possibilities. The children can learn about interest rates, high interest accounts and saving toward goals. In the process they learn how to fill out deposit slips and keep track of a balance. The savings books are very similar to regular bank savings books.

Deposit Slips

Various types of deposit slips can be used for banking. A savings deposit slip similar to a bank's is very easy to use and filling them out can be a learning experience for the children.

Another excellent, although more difficult, method of depositing money is the checking account deposit slip. Even though these are savings accounts, a checking account deposit slip is a very good learning experience for the children because of its prolific use in society.

Desk Check Sheets

The desk check sheet is optional but can be used to reward individual on task or positive behavior. These cards would be turned in weekly and the dollar value would be added to the childs pay check.

Every Child Must Have A Job

The P.R.A.I.S.E. system creates new jobs, primarily from the reinforcement areas. These jobs added to the regular room jobs can provide enough jobs for all.

Naturally with every job must come a rate of pay. The pay scales should be about the same for every job with only slight differences so no student can obtain vast sums of money because he or she got a certain job. The typical jobs and pay rates might be something like the:

JOB	# OF POSITIONS	PAY PER WEEK
Bankers	4	$30
Popcorn poppers	3	$30
Taking care of animals	6	$20
Back sink area cleaners	4	$40 (varied)
Head banker	1	$40
Librarians	2	$30
Mortgage collectors	2	$30
Stock seller	1	%
Pencil seller	1	$20
Free time seller	1	$20
Current event board	1	$20
Door monitors	2	$20
Can counters	2	$20
Stereo time seller	1	$20
Reading area cleaners	2	$20
Encyclopedias	1	$20

At the beginning of the program each child will fill out a job application and list three preferences. Jobs should be rotated periodically in order to promote fairness and additional learning opportunities.

Bank Balance Sheets

The bank balance sheets are used to keep track of every individuals deposits and withdrawals. These sheets have a grid pattern and are very easy to use.

Each banker is given a balance sheet on the day the bank is open. The banker fills in the various deposits and withdrawals next to the name of a customer and

under the column for the correct date. After the bank closes each banker gives their balance sheet to the head banker. The head banker transfers each balance sheet onto a master sheet.

The master balance sheet keeps an accurate account of deposits and withdrawals. It does not keep a running balance. About every six weeks, generally when jobs are rotated, the master balance sheet should be computed for each child to determine if his or her book balance is correct. If the bank book and the sheet don't balance, the error can be checked through the record keeping of the head banker. It is important that the bankers be fairly good at math for obvious reasons.

Reinforcers

Once the P.R.A.I.S.E. system has been set in motion and everybody is earning their money you must have something for the children to spend it on. The reinforcements should include short range, weekly or daily, as well as long range rewards, yearly.

On the positive end of the scale various types of reinforcement must be used. The children may have some excellent suggestions as to these types of reinforcement. As a starter you may want to use some of the following:

1. Popcorn
2. Pencils
3. Free time (games, animals, etc.)
4. Films or film loops
5. Record player
6. Tape recorder
7. T.V.
8. Type
9. Do something with teacher (Bowl, tennis, lunch, etc.)

These short range reinforcements must be changed or added to occasionally to keep the students motivated. Remember, this is just a basic list of short range reinforcers. Your students and fellow teachers will have many more suggestions.

In my classroom the long range reinforcement is a unique auction at the end of the year which will be discussed in detail later. You may have other ideas for your own classroom for long range reinforcements.

Since this system is not entirely positive, rules and consequences must be developed for negative behavior. With your guidance, the children are very good at establishing classroom rules. They can also establish the monetary fines for infractions of these rules. The use and amount of the monetary fines should be flexible and become economically related to pay scales.

THE P.R.A.I.S.E. SYSTEM AT WORK

Once all the preparations have been made the system can be introduced to the class. Immediately the children will fill out their job applications. They may want to get recommendations from previous teachers or parents, and are encouraged to do so. Once the applications have been processed by you, the program can get into full swing.

Generally bank day is Monday and the half-hour period you set aside for the bank to be open is the only time during the week that the bank does business. Since bank day is Monday, pay day should also be Monday and each child should receive their pay check.

The children should be aware of what reinforcements are available each week since some are ongoing and others are left up to the teacher's discretion. They need to know this so they can budget the amount they want for reinforcements and the amount they want to save. Reinforcements can only be purchased with cash.

Each child's job provides him or her with a certain income, but the majority of their incomes come from their daily work. Every assignment, or as

many assignments as you decide, should be given a maximum monetary value which is determined by the teacher. When the assignment is corrected, it is given a mark and a dollar value which is recorded on your point sheet. These points are added at the end of the week and transferred to their checks.

The money can be used as a motivator. A good example of this would be creative writing. I have found that having creative writing contests each week has improved the writings of my students a great deal, and more children are actually participating than under usual conditions. Money can also be used as prizes for winning teams in various math, language, social studies and other subject games. These games become very exciting as they become more like T.V. game shows.

I stated earlier that this program is inexpensive to run; it can actually be run without costing you a cent. Each year I've had my students collect newspapers for recycling. The money received from the sale of these newspapers is used for the purchase of the reinforcements which cost money. Accurate record keeping of money received and spent (receipts) is necessary to keep you legally covered.

The only reinforcements that usually cost anything are the popcorn and bowling with the teacher. The total expense for these reinforcers over a school year may amount to a maximum of fifty dollars.

Each year during the second to last week of school my class room has an auction. A couple of weeks prior to this the class decides what they would like to purchase with the balance of their real money. A committee and myself go out and purchase the suggested items. The children are also asked to bring in any old games, books and toys from home. See Appendix I.

On the day of the auction everything is sold. In the morning the children cash in their savings accounts and the auction takes place in the afternoon.

Every child is allowed to purchase one new item before anyone can purchase another. The monetary value of the auction items may be as high as $50,000 and the amount of money exchanging hands my go as high as $1,000,000 on auction day. It is easy to see why the children are so enthusiastic and excited about this activity.

EXPANDING THE SYSTEM

Once the basic P.R.A.I.S.E. system has been established, it is easily expanded upon for further learning and reinforcement. Some of the things you may want to do would be:

1. Set up a tutoring program with tutors receiving hourly income.
2. Teach the children about the stock market and invest in it.
3. Allow children to purchase their desks much the same as property. The desks are sold back at the end of the year with a percentage returned as profit or loss if desk is damaged.
4. Arrange the room in table groups. Peer pressure will work to promote appropriate behavior at the table for money rewarded to the table. Appropriate behavior is behavior that is acceptable to you.
5. Suggest that the classroom set up their own corporation with investors. A product could be sold to the school.

SUMMARY

The P.R.A.I.S.E. system is not the answer to all the problems in the classroom; in fact, it creates a few new ones such as where to store the newspapers which is trivial compared to the decisions as to what reinforcements to use. Yet, I believe that the P.R.A.I.S.E. system is definitely a step in the right direction because of what it does for the children. It's good for handling and modifying behavior problems. It is excellent for teaching economics, math and banking processes. It can motivate low ability students to achieve to their potential. Most of all the P.R.A.I.S.E. system is a learning and motivating activity for the children, and they love it.

APPENDIX I

ITEMIZED ACCOUNT OF EXPENDITURES AND EARNINGS

Albums

Shinin' On - 2 @ $4.96	$ 9.92
Chicago	$ 4.96
Chicago VII	$ 7.99
John Denver	$ 4.96
Elton John - 2 @ $7.98	$ 15.96
Best of Bread	$ 4.94

Singles all at 79¢

2 - For the Love of Money	$ 1.58
2 - Band on the Run	$ 1.58
2 - The Streak	$ 1.58
1 - The Show Must Go On	$ .79
1 - Oh My My	$ .79
2 - Tubular Bells	$ 1.58
1 - Hooked on a Feeling	$ .79
3 - Bennie and the Jets	$ 2.37
4 - Loco-motion	$ 3.16
2 - Searchin' So Long	$ 1.58
1 - The Entertainer	$ .79

Radios

2 @ $5.89	$ 11.78
6 @ $3.33	$ 19.98
1 @ $4.96	$ 4.96
3 sets @ $9.96	$ 29.88
1 cassette @ $12.00	$ 12.00
1 @ $6.86	$ 6.86

Books

6 @ $1.20	$ 7.20
1 @ $3.16	$ 3.16

Miscellaneous

4 - Baseballs @ $1.49	$ 5.96
1 - Model	$ 1.82
1 - Model	$ 1.11
2 - Frisbees @ 78¢	$ 1.56
1 - Dartboard	$ 3.97
1 - Swim mask	$ 4.95
1 - Aquarium complete	$ 9.75
1 - Bat	$ 3.24
6 - Records	$ 3.78
Sales Tax	$ 11.84
TOTAL SPENT	$209.12

EARNINGS

March	$ 42.50
April	$ 81.50
May	$ 56.00
June	$ 29.12
TOTAL EARNED	$209.12